

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 PHNOM 16149 051244Z

42

ACTION SS-25

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O 051118Z DEC 74 ZFF-4

FM AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8503

CINCPAC HONOLULU HI IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T PHNOM PENH 16149

EXDIS (MILITARY ADDEE HANDLE AS SPECAT EXCLUSIVE

CINCPAC FOR POLAD TO PASS TO AMBASSADOR DEAN

E.O.11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR CB

SUBJECT: LONG BORET'S PLAN TO RESIGN

REF: STATE 266186

1. IN RESPONSE QUESTIONS PARA TWO REFTEL, FOLLOWING IS OUR BEST ESTIMATE:

(A) WITH FORCEFUL BACKING OF AMBASSADOR AND USG, LONG BORET STANDS A GOOD CHANCE OF BRINGING THE KHMER MILITARY UNDERCONTROL, AND THE PRESENT TIME IS PROPITIOUS FOR HIM BECAUSE OF HIS ENHANCED STATURE FOLLOWING THE "VICTORY" AT THE UN. WITHOUT OUR BACKING LONG BORET WOULD MOST LIKELY FAIL IN THE ATTEMPT, AS HE HAS NO SPECIAL, INDEPENDENT STRENGTH AS A POLITICIAN THAT WOULD PERMIT HIM TO COME OUT ON TOP AFTER A DOWN-AND-OUT STRUGGLE WITH THE MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT.

(B) WERE LONG BORET TO SUCCEED IN BRINGING THE MILITARY UNDER EFFECTIVE CONTROL IT COULD MATERIALLY ASSIST IN INSTILLING SOME BUDGETARY DISCIPLINE INTO ENTIRE GKR AND IN MAKING AT LEAST A SIZEABLE DENT IN THE PERVASIVE PROBLEM OF CORRUPTION. IF LONG BORET FAILED, WE WOULD BE WORSE OFF THAN IF HE HAD NOT MADE THE ATTEMPT. PERHAPS THE MOST IMPORTANT CONSIDERATION AT THE MOMENT IS THAT THE MERE ATTEMPT, WHETHER SUCCESSFUL OR NOT, COULD EASILY PRECIPITATE A CABINET CRISIS AND A MORE GENERAL POLITICAL CRISIS INVOLVING MILITARY VS. CIVILIANS, OR FACTIONS MADE UP OF BOTH

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 PHNOM 16149 051244Z

STRUGGLING FOR ASCENDANCY, AND ALL THIS AT A MOST INOPPORTUNE

TIME, IN VIEW OF POSSIBILITY THAT KHMER CREDENTIALS MAY YET BE CHALLENGED AT UN.

(C) DESIRABILITY OF HIS PUSHING FORWARD NOW WHILE HE ENJOYS ENHANCED REPUTATION FROM NEW YORK SUCCESS MUST BE WEIGHED AGAINST INADVISABILITY OF RISKING PRECIPITATION OF A POLITICAL CRISIS AT THIS TIME (I.E., PRIOR TO ADJOURNMENT OF UNGA). SEEMS CLEAR TO US THAT WAITING A WHILE IS STRONGLY RECOMMENDED. LONG BORET'S REPUTATION WILL NOT FADE ALL THAT RAPIDLY. IN ANY CASE, NOTHING SHOULD BE ATTEMPTED PRIOR TO AMBASSADOR'S RETURN TO PHNOM PENH, FOR REASONS EXPLAINED BELOW.

(D) IN OUR OPINION USG AND EMBASSY SHOULD GIVE FULL SUPPORT TO LONG BORET'S EFFORT TO BRING MILITARY UNDER EFFECTIVE CIVILIAN CONTROL BECAUSE KQL THAT OBJECTIVE IS WORTH ACHIEVING IT ITSELF; (2) LONG BORET WOULD BE LIKELY TO FAIL WITHOUT OUR SUPPORT; (3) LONG BORET IS THE BEST PRIME MINISTER AVAILABLE FOR THE CURRENT PERIOD AND WE SHOULD THEREFORE HELP HIM STAY IN POWER AND IF POSSIBLE STRENGTHEN HIS POSITION.

2. AGREE ENTIRELY WITH PARAS 3 AND 4 REFTTEL. RECOMMEND THAT CHANGE MEET WITH LONG BORET WHORTLY AFTER HIS RETURN TO PHNOM PENH (LATEST INFO IS THAT HE IS DUE ARRIVE HERE MORNING DEC. 7) AND MAKE FOLLOWING POINTS TO HIM:

(A) WE ARE ENTIRELY SYMPATHETIC TO HIS WISH TO BRING KHMER MILITARY UNDER EFFECTIVE CIVILIAN CONTROL IN ORDER TO DEAL WITH PROBLEMS OF BUDGET INDISCIPLINE AND CORRUPTION, AMONG OTHERS.

(B) THIS COULD BEST BE ACCOMPLISHED AS PART OF A CABINET RESHUFFLE WHICH WOULD INCLUDE A NEW MINISTER OF DEFENSE. (FYI. WE ARE NOT CONVINCED THAT MAKING THE C-IN-C ALSO THE DEFENSE MINISTER IS THE BEST MEANS OF ACHIEVING THE OBJECTIVE, BUT THIS ASPECT NEEDS FURTHER STUDY. WHAT IS REQUIRED IS THE ESTABLISHMENT-OF LINES OF AUTHORITY THAT PLACE THE MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT UNDER THE GOVERNMENT INSTEAD OF ITS BEING A PARALLEL POWER STRUCTURE UNDER THE OVERALL DIRECTION OF THE MARSHAL. END FYI.)

(C) NOW IS NOT THE MOMENT TO DO ANYTHING THAT MIGHT PRECIPITATE A CABINET-POLITICAL CRISIS, IN VIEW OF UNFINISHED BUSINESS REGARDING KHMER CREDENTIALS AT THE UN.

(D) USG IS FULLY BEHIND LONG BORET AND WISHES TO HELP HIM ACHIEVE HIS OBJECTIVE. INTERCESSION BY AMBASSADOR WITH THE MARSHAL AND PERHAPS WITH SOSTHENE FERNANDEZ WILL MOST PROBABLY SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 PHNOM 16149 051244Z

BE CRITICAL TO SUCCESS OF HIS EFFORT.

(E) THEREFORE HE SHOULD DO NOTHING PRECIPITOUS AT THIS TIME SUCH AS RESIGNING OR THREATENING TO RESIGN, BUT SHOULD AWAIT AMBASSADOR'S RETURN TO PHNOM PENH, FOLLOWING WHICH CAREFUL PLANNING TOGETHER WILL HELP ASSURE SUCCESS.
KEELEY

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